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SUBJECT: ROBOT CAMEL JOCKEYS DEBUT IN KUWAIT

REF: A. KUWAIT 3640

[B](#). KUWAIT 3532

[C](#). KUWAIT 3412

[1](#)1. The Public Authority for Youth and Sports (PAYS) invited PolOff to attend the debut of robot camel jockeys in Kuwait during trial races October 12. Shaykh Fahad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, PAYS Chairman, and MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaie, Chair of the National Assembly's Human Rights Defense Committee, inaugurated the races, covered widely by local print and television media. The GOK has demanded that robots replace children beginning this racing season, which opened October [1](#)4. Approximately 25 camels fitted with mechanical jockeys circled the six-mile track at the country's sole venue, the Kuwait Camel Racing Club over which PAYS has direct jurisdiction, as their owners controlled the robots' movements from sports utility vehicles flanking the track.

[1](#)2. Each robot, donning a miniature baseball cap, weighs approximately 10 kgs (22 lbs). While officials told PolOff that the robots tested were manufactured in China and in the United Arab Emirates, a local newspaper reported that they were Swiss-made. The robot is constructed with a whip in its right hand and a retractable harness cord in its left. The owners can control the robot's arm movements, thereby directing the camel, via a remote control the size of a car fob. One camel owner witnessing the trial runs told a local newspaper that "the robots are very good, but nothing compares to humans."

[1](#)3. A 2004 Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor decree forbids the employment of children younger than 18 years of age and less than 45 kgs (99 lbs) as camel jockeys. Although there is no evidence of trafficked underage camel jockeys in Kuwait, the GOK is expected to introduce a ban on the practice, which would criminalize any violation, in the National Assembly during the current legislative session, which began October [1](#)7.

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